



Chapter 2: Public Process

The Manchester Comprehensive Plan synthesizes information and issues from many sources. Public participation was essential. In gathering this input, city staff and members of the study team provided numerous opportunities to engage the public. These interactions took place in a variety of formats:

- **Public Meetings**
- **Community Survey**
- **Focus Groups**
- **Steering Committee**

The plan's direction, focus of the analysis, and final recommendations are a result of a public involvement effort. The project team and city staff worked with the Board of Aldermen and the Planning and Zoning Commission as a Steering Committee and sounding board for community issues and concerns.

Public Meetings

The Steering Committee met following all of the public workshops to review a summary of the proceedings and make decisions necessary to keep the plan moving forward. The city staff organized a series of public meetings and workshops to reach the maximum

number of participants. These meetings were held throughout the community to educate and inform about the planning process as well as to solicit input concerning important community issues.

During the August 16, 2002 public meeting for the City of Manchester Comprehensive Plan, many issues and concerns were raised and discussed. Seventeen discussion topics within six general categories were recorded. Within each topic are lists of key issues that were raised during the discussions. The issue(s) within each category that garnered the greatest response within each topic is italicized.

Vision

1. Future Vision

- *Need a community meeting place (public or private)*
- Lack of community identity
- Lack of linkages between neighborhoods

Roads/Transportation

2. Manchester Road

- *Creates a barrier between north and south sides of street*

- North side appears unfinished compared to south
- Need pedestrian crossing
- Traffic volume is a problem
- Consider frontage/outer roads
- Consider shared access to businesses

3. Missouri Highway 141 (Highway 141)

- *A barrier between east and west Manchester*
- Opportunities for major development at Manchester interchange
- Need bike pedestrian crossing
- Bridge has/will foster community gateway
- Problem with litter
- Sound barriers should be landscaped



Highway 141 Bridge across Manchester Road

4. Public Transportation

- *Poor bus schedules, must bring employees in for work, have some non-drivers*
- Metrolink would put Manchester on the map

Commercial Development

5. Manchester Road Corridor

- *Need safe pedestrian crossings and sidewalks*
- *Need more parking*
- Lack of unifying identity
- Would like mixed use development—town center
- Currently looks rundown

6. Commercial Redevelopment

- *Strip mall issue must be addressed*
- Want to attract office, high quality retail
- Want destination restaurants, ethnic grocery stores
- Need site assembly with city help to create place for redevelopment, no large sites available
- Mixed use may be acceptable



Potential commercial redevelopment

7. Economic Growth

- *Car dealerships are viewed as unattractive*
- Maintain mix of large and small businesses
- More retail possible at Big Bend and Highway 141

8. Landscape/Streetscape

- *Community enjoys planters*
- Need sidewalks, street lighting and trees
- Want more public landscape/streetscape



Potential landscape and streetscape elements

- Little public information about parks
- Green space is disappearing
- Need to maintain attractiveness to youth, young families



Bike and pedestrian trail

Residential and Parks

9. Neighborhoods

- *Want to identify Manchester to outsiders*
- “Best Kept Secret”
- Importance of good schools
- Like big trees, old homes, walkable, and safe
- Potential for quality in-fill compatible with existing neighborhoods
- Want to encourage home ownership
- Neighborhood preservation important
- Some concern about tear-downs replaced by bigger homes

10. Parks/Open Space

- *Would like community trail system (bike/pedestrian)*
- Pool is well liked
- Not much open space, should maximize public use

11. Infrastructure

- *Multiple individual issues, including erosion and storm-water management*
- Neighborhoods do not like cut-through streets
- Need infrastructure assessment and funding analysis
- Want to understand future traffic patterns

Urban Design

12. Design

- *Reflect the character of Manchester, community heritage*
- Want unified theme for new buildings and redevelopment
- Want consistent design quality
- Highway 141 Bridge design well-liked

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- Desire for banner signs, markers, and streetlights
- Current code has design gaps



Potential types of design elements

13. Historic Preservation

- *Split view on definition and importance of historic: old is not necessarily historic*
- History plays a role in community character
- City Hall is an icon, provides a sense of character

People

14. Citizens

- *Want greater involvement in neighborhood and historic organizations*
- Many residents only “reside” here, leave all day for work

15. Government

- *Want progressive approach*
- Desire more community-wide events, bring people together
- Project approval can be chaotic, want more continuity

These issues were further refined in public meetings held in September and November. They formed the basis for the preparation of the plan alternatives described in Chapter 4.

Focus Group Interviews

A series of focus group sessions were held in August 2002. These small groups of four to ten members allowed for more in-depth discussions of specific topics. The focus groups included:

- Neighborhood Trustees
- Public Institutions
- Historic Preservation
- Businesses
- Real Estate/Development
- City Officials

Similar to the public meetings, the focus group meetings covered a variety of topics. Highlights and themes included:

Public Institutions

- People are happy with city services.
- Public transportation is lacking.
- City needs to distinguish itself from other communities.
- There are strong established neighborhoods.
- There is a lack of cooperation with surrounding communities.
- Infrastructure is coming along slowly.
- There is a loss of green space.

Historic Preservation

- The city needs a business association to enhance the historic district.
- With greater resources, there is a potential to purchase important properties.
- The historic properties can enhance the entire community.
- Some new development has tried to incorporate historic “touches” in design.
- There should be ordinances to protect historic structures along Manchester Road and Henry Avenue.

Trustees

- There should be more positive PR about what Manchester is doing.
- Manchester lacks identification; businesses say they are in Ballwin.
- It is not safe for children to ride bikes through neighborhoods.
- The city needs to improve sewer, stormwater, and other infrastructure.
- There is not a clear understanding of what historic structures should be preserved.
- Plants and streetscape are a positive and pretty way to distinguish community character.
- There is a desire to develop a sense of community definition and identity.

Business Owners

- Due to severe traffic, there is a need to create an outer roadway or frontage road system.

- There is a need to identify opportunities and places for businesses to expand.
- The city lacks sidewalks, trees and a cohesive appearance; there is room for more buildings downtown.
- Pedestrian facilities are necessary.
- The community needs some “really awesome” restaurants.
- There is no premier retail in the area.
- The city needs to coordinate and incorporate existing landowners into a redevelopment program that will work for the community.
- The city needs to communicate better with the business community.

Community Survey

The public outreach process included a community survey to determine citizen opinions about local issues. The survey posed a series of questions, ranging from park use to the need for more industrial land use in the city. The survey was mailed out to over 7,600 households, of which 562 households responded. This survey was used to gain insight into issues and ideas related to the future of Manchester. The responses to the survey were taken in context with other comments received from the focus groups, public meetings, and the Steering Committee. The following is a synopsis of the results of the survey.

Parks

Nearly 40% of the respondents indicated that they use city parks five or more times in a year. This is a sign that parks are an important service to

the community. However, nearly half (47%) of the respondents rarely if ever utilize parks. This is consistent with a concern raised during the planning process that there is a need for more parks and better bicycle/pedestrian pathways to connect parks together. Manchester Road and Highway 141 hinder bike and pedestrian access to city facilities such as Paul A. Schroeder Park and the Manchester Aquatic Center.

Respondents to the survey also expressed a desire for the City to build a community center. There was no indication what location is preferred but typically one should be located in strategic proximity to existing or planned recreational assets.

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Historic Character

The survey indicated strong support for the historic buildings and streetscape of the historic downtown* located along Manchester Road, west

* There is a lack of consensus within the community about the best term to apply to the stretch of Manchester Road between Highway 141 on the east and Sulphur Spring Road on the west. Originally referenced in the planning process as the downtown or historic downtown, the name changed over time and become the historic town center by the end of this project. The Comprehensive Plan tracks this change and tries to maintain consistency with the terminology used at different times in the planning process.

of Highway 141 and east of Sulphur Spring Road. This was supported by comments from focus groups and public meetings. The bridge and historic buildings within this area provide Manchester with an identity and character that does not exist in many nearby communities. However, over half of the survey respondents indicated that they do not use the shops and stores along the corridor.

The survey indicated that most people agree or strongly agree that the city's historic heritage should be preserved. With respect to keeping the historic downtown unchanged, the answers were divided. The idea of changing or updating the historic downtown was evenly split. However, most respondents agreed or strongly agreed that new buildings in the historic downtown should look traditional.

The general sense from the planning process is that the historic downtown is important to the citizens of Manchester. There is a strong sentiment that this area is underutilized and that there is a need to create a central place for citizens to come for shopping, entertainment, and services.

Pedestrians

Sidewalks, bike/walk trails, and safe highway crossing points were all identified as priorities by survey respondents (over 60%) and other participants in the planning process. Specific ideas were brought out in the planning process during public meetings regarding safety issues for pedestrians and bicyclists crossing Manchester Road and Highway 141.

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Other suggestions included using common ground and open space in existing neighborhoods to create a network of trails that would link parks, schools and other city features together.



Potential pedestrian connection

Transportation

The survey results also identified a need for mass transportation. This topic was also discussed in public meetings and focus groups. This input reflected the recognition that the population in Manchester and surrounding communities is concerned about mobility. It was noted that the City of Manchester is not in a position to undertake such a service at this time. The city should be involved with the appropriate St. Louis transportation authority to advocate future access and connections to metro-wide mass transportation.

Survey respondents also indicated a desire for a community gathering place or community center in the city. This issue was raised initially during the public meetings. Ideas included the establishment of a mixed-use area in the historic downtown. The gathering place could provide for both indoor and outdoor public gathering as well

as a place to hold community-wide celebrations.

Summary

Through the public process, the citizens of Manchester inventoried and identified many key aspects of the community. The city has a number of strengths that anchor Manchester, including:

- Strong neighborhoods
- Commercial strength and redevelopment potential of Manchester Road
- Potential commercial opportunities along Highway 141
- Historic character
- Good location
- Available recreation options

Conversely, the citizens and community leaders also believe that Manchester has some problems that it must resolve, including:

- Lack of community identification
- Highway 141 and Manchester Road dividing the community
- Infrastructure deficiencies
- Divided opinion about historic structures
- Appropriate uses in inappropriate locations (e.g., car dealerships)
- Perceived lack of city communication with residents and businesses

In addition to local issues, the public identified some significant needs for the city to address, including:

- Provision for long-term economic growth

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- Definition of historic downtown concept
- Parking in historic downtown
- Creation of a community meeting place or center
- Improved traffic circulation system

Together, these opinions and the public process have identified a number of opportunities for the city moving forward:

- Economic growth through redevelopment
- Definition and refinement of historic downtown as a community meeting place
- Use of historic character to provide community-wide design theme
- Increased park use and provision of connected bike/hike trails
- Preservation and strengthening of Manchester's neighborhoods

As a result of the public process, the project team utilized these strengths, issues, needs, and opportunities to develop three plan alternatives, described in Chapter 4. These alternatives were presented to the public and Steering Committee for multiple reviews and iterations, which lead to the creation of the city's Goals and Policies located in Chapter 5, and the Manchester Future Land Use Plan in Chapter 6.

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Manchester Comprehensive Plan Informational Survey				
The City of Manchester is in the process of updating its Comprehensive Plan. The Plan is a map and policy document that is used to guide land use decisions made by the City Staff, Planning and Zoning Commission and Board of Aldermen. We would like your input into this process. The surveys will be provided to HNTB Corporation, the city's planning consultant.				
How do you learn about Manchester activities and initiatives?				
Newspaper – 483 (Post Dispatch, West County Journal, Suburban Journal, Press Journal, West)				
Courier – 394				
City Meetings – 19				
Trustee Meetings – 10				
City Web Site – 35				
Other – 96 (word of mouth, Manchester newsletter, city mailings, signs)				
How many times a year do you use, do or go to	0	1-2	3-5	5+
1. City parks	105	153	87	217
2. Stores in historic downtown area	153	216	99	84
3. City meetings, festivals or events	171	282	66	24
4. Stores on Manchester Road	14	21	48	453
5. Manchester restaurants	31	72	122	323
6. High school events	338	91	27	79
7. Neighborhood meeting	322	171	22	8
8. Planning & Zoning Commission meeting	487	37	4	1
9. Board of Aldermen meeting	470	46	10	3
Please share your opinion about the following:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Manchester's boundaries are clearly defined	56	223	214	25
2. The city's historic heritage should be preserved.	26	32	280	205
3. The downtown should remain unchanged.	46	177	193	80
4. The downtown should be updated.	90	182	169	69
5. New buildings in the city should look traditional	25	76	280	141
6. We need a bike/walk crossing for Manchester Road.	53	111	188	168
7. We need a bike/walk crossing for Highway 141.	56	130	180	151
8. The city needs more sidewalks.	38	146	199	108
9. The city needs a bike/walk trail system.	45	128	203	138
10. We have easy access to public transportation.	83	169	183	36
11. The city needs a community center.	51	141	199	106
12. The city needs a public place, indoor or outdoor	57	138	196	106
13. The city needs more local stores and restaurants	71	204	170	62
14. We need more office space in the city.	80	219	154	25
15. We need more industrial space in the city.	147	258	67	9
16. The city should hold more public meetings	33	229	147	22